



MUTUAL LEARNING ON SOCIAL
INCLUSION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

WISE
Work Integration Social Enterprises
as a tool for promoting inclusion

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



The social economy is an important source of jobs and entrepreneurship, including for people with poor qualifications or whose capacity for work is reduced. It can enable the most disadvantaged to exercise some kind of gainful activity or to create employment in areas without mainstream companies and employers (peripheral areas, remote rural areas). It also provides vital social services and assistance that are often overlooked in the market economy and plays a key role in involving participants and European citizens more fully in society since stakeholders, i.e. workers, volunteers and users, are as a rule involved in management.



Social economy has proved to be very successful in providing work opportunities to disadvantaged groups. In addition to innovative and quality services, a specific type of social economy enterprise called social enterprises offers either transitional job opportunities for workers needing to train or update their skills before going back to the general economy or permanent and adapted jobs for the most disadvantaged categories (mental ill people, physical handicapped, etc.). Within the broad galaxy of social enterprises some have played a major role in the fight against social exclusion: those aiming at the social and professional integration of disadvantaged people.

A specific term has emerged in recent years in Europe to refer to work-integration initiatives within the social economy: Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs).

WISEs are autonomous economic entities whose main goal is to help poorly qualified unemployed people who are at risk of permanent exclusion from the labour market. These enterprises integrate them back into work and society in general through productive activity.

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The project **aims at analysing the role of WISEs** (work integration social enterprises) in promoting social inclusion and the relevance and role they play **within**

- **National Action Plans (NAPs) for inclusion,**
- **NAPs for employment**
- **Structural funds Operational Programmes (Ops).**

Referring to the call for proposal **the two major key policy issues** addressed in the present proposal are:

- **Promoting inclusion of vulnerable groups**, including people with disabilities, people living in / leaving institutions, homeless people, immigrants and ethnic minorities, including Roma, Gypsies and Travellers, and other groups experiencing extreme poverty and exclusion;
- **Role and contribution of the social economy.**



THE STRATEGIC APPROACH

The development of WISEs is related to different public policies and, in particular, social inclusion, employment, and entrepreneurial development.

Member States have to coordinate their national social inclusion and employment policies at European level through the Open Method of Coordination within the European Strategy for Inclusion and the European Employment Strategy. As far as social economy and entrepreneurial development is concerned, there is not a common European policy, but only some tools to link up and compare national measures and support.

In this context the structural funds play (or should play) a key role in:

- Linking different kinds of support (training, business start-up and development, financial...)
- Providing a strategic framework for the development of WISEs
- Supporting directly the EES and the European Inclusion strategy particularly through the ESF.



The project aims at **analysing the NAPs for inclusion and the NAPs for employment** in order to assess the current and potential role of WISEs to support the objectives of these strategies and to promote social inclusion and employment.

Structural funds and in particular the ESF operational programmes will also be analysed to identify and evaluate the measures and the tools foreseen to support the development of WISEs.

One of the main innovation is that all those documents will be examined through a **cross-cutting analysis according to the same criteria in order to assess if and how they promote WISEs.**



In each partner country, best practices of WISEs promoting social inclusion will be analysed in order to show what works on the field and the kind of policy support needed.

The result of this process involving researchers and practitioners will be some **Strategic Recommendations for integrated policies** (ESF, ERDF, NAPs) that will be discussed with policy makers and disseminated in order to ameliorate the coordination of structural funds, employment and inclusion policies for a better inclusion of vulnerable groups, namely through the tool of WISE.



The partnership includes several categories of actors, namely:

Organisations representing WISEs at national and European level. CECOP, Confesal, Coceta, Legacoop Sociali and AGCI solidarietà associate and represent cooperative and employee-owned WISEs at EU and national level. As a whole they represent several thousand of WISEs in different countries and promote their roles within European and national policies (namely policies for inclusion, employment and entrepreneurship). They are the official interlocutors of European, national and regional institutions in the legislative process and in the implementation of concrete policy actions.

EAPN Europe is a European network which promotes the role of WISEs as a tool for promoting inclusion and employment. Many of its national members are either representing or working with WISEs in their countries.

SOS Malta, BDV and Barka Foundation are members of EAPN and associate and promote WISEs in their country. Barka is also strictly linked to CECOP and the cooperative movement in Europe.



CGM and DROM are the two main consortia of social cooperatives in Italy, associating approximately 2000 social cooperatives in the whole country. They promote and support the activity of their members providing training, advice and development tools (quality, trademark, general contracting, etc). They also promote

Even if they are not constituted by WISEs (as the previous two categories), **Aster-x, Assoforr, Inforcoop, Pour la Solidarité, Civil Society Development Foundation and Idekoop are organisations supporting WISEs and their role for inclusion and employment** in their countries. They have a broad experience in terms of support, advice, research, study and training.

DIESIS and EMES are European organisations specialised in supporting and studying social enterprises. They have also a long experience of carrying out European projects and a wide knowledge of European policies and social economy issues.



Also the Leed Programme of OECD is a body providing studies and researches on social inclusion and social enterprise, but it works for its members, who are national governments of OECD countries.

Some national authorities, in charge of the policies dealt by the project, have expressed their interest and willingness in working on the project (the Letter of the Romanian Ministry is attached while letters from Polish, Maltese, and Austrian Ministries are in the process of being signed). Other national and regional authorities will be involved later by the partners who are in direct contact with them for their national activity (namely Legacoopsociali, aster X and AGCI solidarietà in Italy; Confesal and COCETA in Spain; Idekoop in Finland and PLS in Belgium).

The project involves 8 countries.



The partners can be divided in three categories according to their main role:

National partners (Assoforn, Aster X, Barka, BDV, Coceta, CGM, Confesal, CSDF, Drom, Inforcoop, Idekoop, Legacoopsociali, PLS, SOS) : they participate in the Steering Group, the national analyses, the peer reviews, the cross cutting report, the final European seminar and the dissemination and mainstreaming of results at national level. In the countries where there is more than one partner, each partner leads one or more activities according to its main competences.

European partners (CECOP, DIESIS, EAPN, EMES and OECD): they participate to the Scientific Committee and Steering group, define the framework and the methodology for analysis, comment the analysis done at national/regional level, chair the peer reviews, comment and supervise the cross cutting reports, elaborate the strategic guidelines, participate to the final seminar and the dissemination of results at European level.

National institutions: they support the project, provide information and participate to national analyses and cross cutting reports, participate to peer reviews, European workshops and national dissemination and mainstreaming.



DIESIS coordinates the project and its European activities, organises the meetings of the Scientific Committee and the final workshop, is in charge (with CGM) of the project publications and newsletter, evaluates the project and coordinates the dissemination of project results;

CGM, as lead applicant, performs all the administrative and financial tasks of the applicant, coordinates the project with DIESIS, participate to the Scientific Committee, is in charge (with DIESIS) of the project publications and newsletter;



The main concrete outputs of the project will be:

National and regional reports. Eight national reports will be produced (one per country). In the biggest countries (Italy and Spain) where policies and structural funds implementation is strongly regionalised, regional reports will also be produced (at least 2 in Spain and 3 in Italy). National reports will be produced in national languages and English. The national and regional reports (approx 50-80 pages) will analyse:

- The policies and measures directly supporting WISEs in NAPs and OPs
- The policies and measures that may impact on developing WISEs in NAPs and OPs
- Some good practices of policies and measures developing WISEs even if not connected to NAPs and OPs.
- Some draft comments and conclusions on present situation and improvements for the future.

Peer reviews. Four bilateral peer reviews will be organised. The Scientific Committee will decide the “pairs” of countries according to the results of the national/regional reports. Peer review will involve partners and experts of the two concerned countries and will be chaired by a member of the Scientific Committee. The peer review will produce a report in English outlining the main issues discussed and results in terms of transferability and policy messages.



(National) Cross cutting reports. The eight cross cutting reports are based on the results of the national/regional reports, the peer reviews, the contributions and comments of the Scientific Committee and the feed back meeting. The cross cutting reports underline the relationship (or the lack of relationship) between the different policies (inclusion, employment) and relative tools (NAPs, OPs). Concrete good practices (described in national reports) are analysed in order to show their links with policies and/or their potential impact on the development of new policies. They also contain proposals for national/regional strategic guidelines.

Members of the Scientific Committee will supervise the NCCR

Strategic Guidelines will be elaborated by the Scientific Committee on the basis of the cross cutting reports and the proposals for national strategic guidelines. A set of strategic guidelines including EU guidelines and guidelines common for groups of countries will be used for:

- Mainstreaming of WISE practices into employment, inclusion and structural funds policies and actions
- Integrated policies
- Efficient public/social economy partnerships.

They will be produced and published in English and in all the partners' languages.



A European seminar will be organised to disseminate the results of the project at European level. European and national policy makers will be invited to discuss the relevance of the project findings and the use of strategic guidelines for the future implementation of inclusion and employment policies and structural funds.

National seminars/workshops will also be organised in order to disseminate the results at national level. They are mainly addressed to national and regional policy makers in order to discuss the results of the project and how to mainstream them into policies.

All the outputs of the project, described above, will be published on the project web site.

In addition, the national reports, cross cutting reports and strategic guidelines will be published on paper in national languages and in English.

